The Big Stone

Robinson Jack

A row of buttons

Down his back

Hey! Ho! Tippity Toe

Turn the ship

And away we go.

Breathlessly we skipped most of the

way up to the ‘The Big Stone’. Not straight up the hill but on one of the three paths

that had less of an incline. A magical

wonderland surrounded by lakes and

forests near Rostrevor County Down. On
the banks of Carlingford Lough. Northern
Ireland. Mother led the pack. Five of us
with me and my sister’s friend. All
squeezed into our Hillman Hunter car.

‘The Clonmore Stone Walk’ was never
too busy on Wednesdays. Father
remained beside the car. Reading his
newspaper and smoking his pipe. Keeping
the picnic safe. The excitement we felt

was boundless as mother had filled us in

on the story.

How the ‘stone’ was hurled across

Carlingford Lough from the Cooley

Mountains by the giant Finn McCool. In a

fight with a Scottish giant, the Scottish

giant flung back a mound of earth. When

caught by the wind and landed in the sea.

It became known as the Isle of Man. So

‘they’ say she added.

We played ‘tig’ on arrival. Round and

round the big stone until exhaustion set

in. “Imagine”, Marie said, “A giant so big.

So strong could do this.” As we sat down.

Seeing the whole lough, the mountains of Mourne and all. The trees as we sat on the grass sparked a guessing game.

“I don’t think”, my big sister Noreen

said. “He didn’t throw it at all. Finn just

put it on a horse and cart. Driving it

around the road”. “There were no roads

then,” Dympna her friend chipped in. So it went on. All of us had a theory. Skipping

down again, mother led the rhyme as we

sang, “Up the hill for butter milk, down

the hill for brandy, the Devil he lives in a

hole, the butcher is a dandy.